



COVID-19 Universal Masking and Cloth Mask Guidance

Overview

This document provides general guidance on the use and care of reusable cloth masks and face coverings. Based on a review of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations and state guidelines, the University is requiring the use of masks as an additional precaution during the COVID-19 outbreak. Face masks and coverings should be used when two or more people are unable to remain at least six feet from one another. Masks made of fabric and cloth are not considered Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). However, these masks can be an effective complement to physical distancing, handwashing, and other mitigation measures. *For questions regarding access to PPE, please consult with the [Office of Environmental Health and Safety](#). Any individuals who need consideration for PPE, due to a medical accommodation, should contact [Human Resources](#).*

Required Use

Students will be required to wear face coverings while in class, conducting business on campus, and sharing common areas and spaces. Faculty will be provided the option to utilize a clear barrier at a podium or wear a face covering. The clear barrier may be preferred by some faculty as some students require accommodations for comprehension of material being discussed and/or presented. Employees, both faculty and staff, in their offices working independently will not have to wear face coverings. Employees in common areas and shared/meeting spaces will be required to wear face coverings. Face coverings will not be required outside; however, they will be required anywhere that appropriate physical distancing is not possible.

Cloth masks limit the **wearer** from spreading infectious droplets in the air by containing coughs, sneezes, and particles generated when the wearer talks. Use of cloth masks will help reduce the likelihood of transmission of the virus to others. *Remember this saying: “My mask protects you, your mask protects me.”* However, **face masks and coverings do NOT eliminate the need for physical distancing of at least six feet.**

Obtaining Face Masks and/or Coverings

The University will provide face coverings to every student, faculty, and staff. For University students, including students living off-campus, face coverings will be distributed as part of the move-in process. For details, contact the [Division of Student Affairs](#). For faculty and staff, distribution will vary. Broad-based distribution will be coordinated by the [Office of Environmental Health and Safety](#) in accordance with the University’s distribution plan. Employees and students who wish to wear homemade or previously purchased face masks or face coverings instead of University-issued coverings, may do so as long as the coverings:

- Fit snugly and comfortably against the side of the face;
- Are secured with ties, ear loops, or equivalent;
- Include multiple layers of fabric;
- Allow for breathing without restriction; and
- Do not contain any derogatory, offensive, and/or lewd messages either in words or pictures.

Visitors who come to campus should have their own mask prior to arrival. This includes contractors and contract employees. If a visitor does not have their own mask, they should inquire with their University contact to see if a mask is available. Otherwise, masks will be available for purchase in the University Bookstore.

RUC faculty, staff, and students must adhere to any additional Carilion guidelines for face masks and coverings. At this time Carilion requires the use of a face covering for entry within the Community Hospital facility. Additionally, if directly working with patients, face shields and gloves may be required. Due to the nature of certain clinical requirements, additional safety precautions and equipment may be required. Please consult with program directors or clinical coordinators for further guidance.

Precautions

Face masks are only effective for protection if they are handled, worn, stored, and laundered or disposed of properly. Experts continue to strongly urge everyone to maintain at least six feet of physical distancing when possible—even with the use of face masks.

Face coverings are not personal protective equipment. The CDC recommends the use of coverings to decrease the spread of droplets containing the virus that may be generated when the wearer coughs, sneezes or talks.

Wearing a face covering does not replace the need for physical distancing or other measures to prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. In addition to wearing cloth face coverings, remember to:

- Avoid contact with those who are sick, stay home if you are sick, and if you become sick at work, distance yourself from co-workers, contact your supervisor and go home.
- Maintain at least six feet of distance from others on campus at all times, or as often as feasible.
- Frequently clean hands with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) if handwashing facilities are unavailable.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Practice good cough and sneeze etiquette.
- Routinely disinfect high touch points, facilities, work areas, personal electronics, and shared equipment and spaces. Frequently-touched surfaces in University vehicles should be wiped down after each shift or before a different employee uses the vehicle, including steering wheels, door handles, turn signals, gear shifts, and seat belts. Facilities Management Housekeeping will be engaging in enhanced cleaning/disinfecting procedures.
- Face coverings should not create additional hazards to the user, e.g. restrictions to breathing, or entanglement hazards with ties and straps.

Special Situations

A face covering is not required when working alone in segregated spaces (i.e., cubicles with walls, private offices, etc.) or when walking alone outdoors away from others. The requirement for a face covering does not apply to anyone for whom doing so would be contrary to his or her health or safety because of a medical condition.

Cloth face coverings are not to be used in laboratories where individuals may be working with hazardous, biological, or radioactive materials. People working in laboratories should be provided surgical masks and potentially other types of respiratory protection. A mask used in a laboratory setting that has the potential for contamination should not be worn outside of the laboratory. As you do with other laboratory PPE, such as a lab coat and gloves, the mask you wear in the laboratory should be removed before leaving or when leaving the laboratory.

N95 respirators and KN95 respirators are critical PPE that must be reserved for healthcare workers, medical first responders and those performing the limited high-risk tasks directly supporting the continuity of healthcare, public safety, or those with approved accommodations.

Circumstances Where Physical Distancing is Difficult to Achieve

There may be instances where physical distancing is difficult to achieve or maintain due to different instructional needs or workplace operations. Such cases, as identified by University departments, operational units, and/or Facilities Management, will be referred to the [Office of Environmental Health and Safety](#) for evaluation. In these cases, it may be determined that PPE may be needed including, but not limited to: gloves, face shields, disposable gowns, and/or respiratory protection.

Care and Use

Face masks and coverings should be made with multiple layers of fabric, allow for breathing without restriction, and be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage.

Best practices for fabric and cloth masks are provided below:

- Wash all provided face masks or coverings upon receipt. The masks are not sterilized.
- Wash the mask after each use. Reusable face coverings should be taken home and laundered each night.
- Wash in hot water with regular detergent. Dry completely on a hot setting. Reusable face masks or coverings can be washed with other laundry items.
- Before putting on a mask and immediately after removing, wash hands with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, if there is no access to handwashing facilities.
- Ensure the mask fits snugly around the mouth and nose. Coverings should fit comfortably against the sides of the face, placed over the mouth and nose, and be secured with ties or ear loops.
- Individuals should be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth when removing face masks or coverings.
- Do not wear the mask if it is damp or wet from spit or mucus.
- Remove the mask from behind without touching the front side.
- Do not put a used face mask or covering in places where others can touch it or where germs trapped in your face mask or covering can touch other surfaces. Keep a paper bag with you to store your face covering if you will be taking it off.
- Do not hoard or stockpile face masks and/or coverings. Supplies are limited and difficult to find. Your cooperation is needed to ensure that we can protect our entire campus community.

Best practices for disposable face masks and coverings are provided below:

- Reusable cloth face coverings should not be worn when conducting work or research in a laboratory where direct handling of hazardous chemicals, biohazards, or radioactive materials may occur. Disposable face coverings should be worn in these types of settings.
- Use disposable coverings until they become damaged, soiled, or wet. If a mask becomes damp from normal respiration, perspiration or from water, remove the mask and store in a sanitary location (e.g. paper bag to allow the mask to dry and then reuse).
- Disposable coverings, if not exposed to hazardous materials (e.g. laboratory work), can be reused following a storage and rotation method. If their storage location (e.g. paper bag) is clearly dated with the date used and then also indicated the date when the mask can be reused. The date for reuse should be 72 hours (three days) after the date when last used.
- Students and employees who conduct work or research at the laboratory bench with hazardous chemicals, biohazards, or radioactive materials, or who work each day in a healthcare setting, must discard the disposable face covering at the end of the day.

Unaffiliated Work Locations

Work sites for faculty, staff, or students that are unaffiliated with Radford University must follow the guidelines established for that work site. Those in healthcare locations, including clinics and hospitals, must follow the requirements of each facility. If working or learning within another school, business, or other public location, individuals must adhere to the specific requirements for each location. Masking and PPE questions can be directed to your supervisor/adviser and/or the [Office of Environmental Health and Safety](#).

N95s and Surgical Masks

Both N95s and surgical masks are considered PPE by the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OHSA). Those required to wear an N95 given their specific job duties must be medically cleared, trained, and fitted as an N95 is a type of filtering facepiece respirator. Use of an N95 requires enrollment in the University's [Respiratory Protection Program](#). N95s are in short supply and are only to be worn by persons, such as healthcare workers and emergency responders, who are in direct contact with ill or potentially ill patients. Use of N95s should be limited to those in healthcare, emergency response, or those with approved accommodations. Respirators with exhalation valves, including N95 respirators with an exhalation valve, allow unfiltered exhaled air to be released and will not protect others near you against COVID-19.

A surgical mask is a type of PPE that is traditionally used in healthcare settings to lower the emission of particles generated when the user coughs, talks, or sneezes. Surgical masks are also in short supply and should be conserved for use in healthcare settings.

Face masks and face coverings are not PPE, however, their use is recommended to decrease the spread of droplets containing the virus that may be generated when the wearer coughs, sneezes, or talks. The CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings when physical distancing measures cannot be maintained.

Accommodations for use of a N95 respirator:

- Wearing an N95 respirator as a workplace accommodation requires contacting the [Department of Human Resources](#).

- Those receiving accommodation approval will work with the [Office of Environmental Health and Safety](#) to both receive an N95 and complete the N95 Voluntary Use form.
- The use of this N95 is solely for a workplace accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic and is only to be used in employees in positions that are deemed to not have occupational exposure to respiratory hazards.
- The wearer of the N95 acknowledges that wearing it does not replace the need to adhere to other Radford University and [CDC guidance](#) to limit the spread of illness (physical distancing, proper hand hygiene, etc.).

General Questions

Do members of the public or visitors to campus, who are outdoors, need to wear a mask?

No, but they must maintain physical distancing. Physical distancing, also called “social distancing,” means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. To practice physical or social distancing:

- Stay at least six feet from other people;
- Do not gather in groups; and
- Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings.

Does someone working in a personal office need a mask or face covering at all times?

Employees isolated in their personal office space, when unshared with any other colleagues, do not need to wear a mask or face covering. However, when the employee leaves their individual office or has invited a colleague into their office, they should wear a mask or face covering. Additionally, one cannot wear a mask or face covering while eating or drinking. At those times, physical distancing techniques should be applied.

Are masks required while driving for work and around campus?

If the person is driving alone throughout the trip, no mask is needed in the vehicle, however, if there are two or more people in the vehicle, a mask should be worn by all occupants. Travel through a drive thru of any kind should also require the use of a mask. Groups planning to take vans or bus trips should reach out to the [Office of Environmental Health and Safety](#) for guidance on how to proceed. When possible, windows should be at least partially open to provide as much fresh air circulation as possible.

What if I do not have a face covering?

Visitors who come to campus and who do not have a face covering may purchase should inquire with their University contact to see if a mask is available. Otherwise, a mask may be available for purchase at the University Bookstore.

Both employees currently working on campus and students living in the residence halls, as well as students living off-campus, should receive face coverings from the University by the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester. Please refer to the University Mask Distribution Plan for more details.

Do masks need to be utilized in the classroom?

Students will be required to wear face coverings while in class, conducting business on campus, and sharing common areas or spaces. Faculty will be provided the option to utilize a clear barrier at a podium or wear a face covering. The clear barrier may be preferred by some faculty as some

students require accommodations for comprehension of material being discussed and/or presented. Employees, both faculty and staff, in their offices working independently will not have to wear face coverings. Employees in common areas and shared/meeting spaces will be required to wear face coverings. Face coverings will not be required outside; however, they will be required anywhere that appropriate physical distancing is not possible.

Is there a recommended type of homemade or purchased mask that can be used on campus?

Those utilizing their own homemade masks should follow [CDC guidance](#) in constructing their mask or face covering. Homemade and purchased masks should not contain any derogatory, offensive, and/or lewd messages either in words or pictures.

What if the person I am supposed to work or learn next to is not maintaining physical distancing nor wearing a face covering when in close proximity to me?

Physical distancing is necessary to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. If an individual has concerns regarding the actions or inactions of another person regarding these guidelines, they are encouraged to discuss this with their supervisor, instructor, or other management personnel.

Will the guidelines of this document be enforced?

The University's face covering requirement will be enforced by the local health district and will be monitored by the appropriate University division, department, and/or office. Individuals are asked to exercise social responsibility, as well as kindness, with respect to the face covering requirement. If you encounter students, faculty, and staff who are not wearing face coverings, be mindful that there could be clear and compelling reasons.